

Section 5: Education and Achievement

EA 1.1 Early Childhood Program Enrollment

Enrollment in an early childhood program is one indicator of readiness to learn in elementary school that may be especially relevant for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In 1998, 48 percent of children ages 3 to 5 who had not yet entered kindergarten attended a nursery school program (see Figure EA 1.1.A). This represents a substantial increase from the 30 percent who attended nursery school in 1980.

When a broader set of *center-based programs* is considered, the increase in early childhood program enrollment is even more substantial. Table EA 1.1 presents the percentage of children, ages 3 and 4, enrolled in day care centers, Head Start programs, preschools, prekindergartens, and other early childhood programs.¹ In 1999, 60 percent of all 3- to 5-year-old children were enrolled in a center-based program. This reflects a modest increase from 53 percent in 1991 and 1993 (see Table EA 1.1).

Differences by Race and Hispanic Origin.² There are notable differences in center-based early childhood program enrollment rates among racial and ethnic groups (see Figure EA 1.1.B). In 1999, only 44 percent of Hispanic children were enrolled in a center-based program, compared with 60 percent of White, non-Hispanic children and 73 percent of Black, non-Hispanic children.

Throughout the 1990s, Black, non-Hispanic 3- to 5-year-olds have had the highest enrollments in center-based programs, followed closely by Whites, non-Hispanic, with much lower enrollments among Hispanics (see Figure EA 1.1.B).

Differences by Poverty Status. There are substantial differences in center-based enrollment rates by socioeconomic status, including poverty status and maternal education (see Table EA 1.1). In 1999, enrollment rates were much higher among *families* that were at or above the poverty threshold (62 percent) than those who were below the poverty threshold (52 percent). Enrollment rates also differ by maternal education, with the highest enrollment (74 percent) among children whose mothers were college graduates and the lowest (40 percent) among children whose mothers lacked a high school diploma.

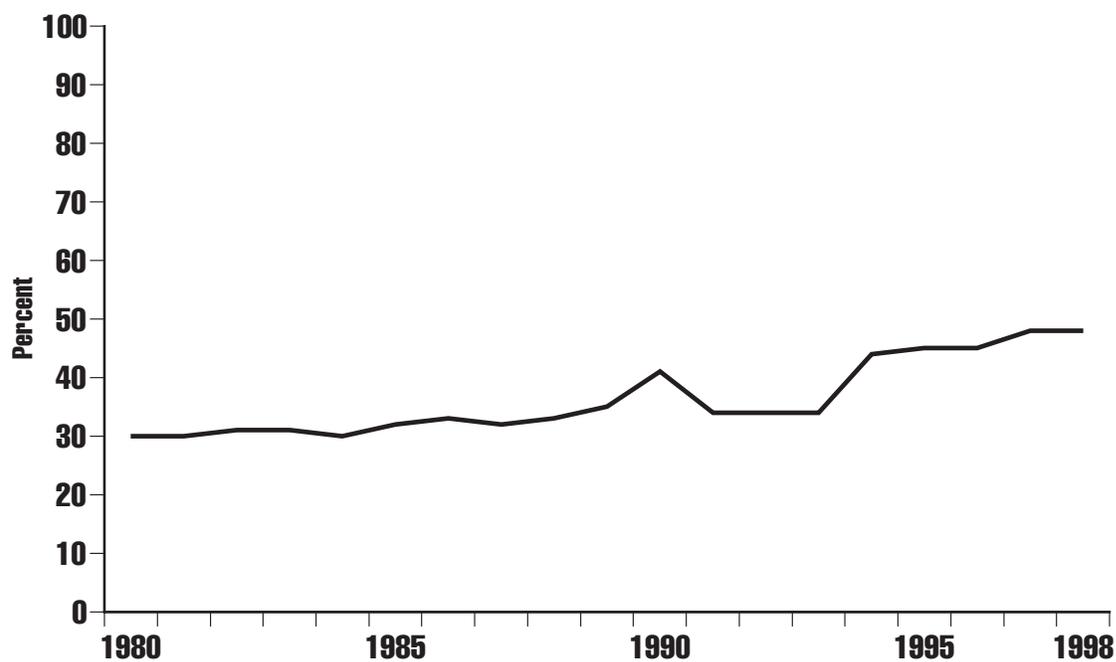
Differences by Mother's Employment Status. There are also differences in enrollment rates by maternal employment status (see Figure EA 1.1.C). In 1999, children whose mothers were working either full-time (35 hours or more per week) or part-time (less than 35 hours per week) had substantially higher enrollment rates than children whose mothers were not in the *labor force*.

¹ Estimates are based on children who have yet to enter kindergarten.

² Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Figure EA 1.1.A

Percentage of 3- to 5-year-olds^a in the United States enrolled in nursery school: 1980-1998



^a Estimates are based on children who have not yet entered kindergarten.

Note: Data for 1990 and 1994-96 may not be comparable with other years because of changes in survey procedures.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, October Current Population Surveys. As published in *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2001*. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, (Table ED2.A).

Enrollment/Attendance

Table EA 1.1

Percentage of 3- to 5-year-olds^a in the United States enrolled in center-based programs,^b by child and family characteristics: Selected years, 1991-1999

	1991	1993	1995	1996	1999
Total	53	53	55	55	60
Gender					
Male	52	53	55	55	61
Female	53	53	55	55	59
Race and Hispanic origin^c					
White, non-Hispanic	54	54	57	57	60
Black, non-Hispanic	58	57	60	65	73
Hispanic	39	43	37	39	44
Poverty status^d					
At or above poverty	56	53	59	59	62
Below poverty	44	49	45	44	52
Family structure					
Two parents	50	52	55	54	59
One or no parent	54	54	56	58	62
Mother's education^e					
Less than high school	32	33	35	37	40
High school/GED	46	43	48	49	52
Vocational/technical/some college	60	60	57	58	63
College graduate	72	73	75	73	74
Mother's employment status^e					
35 hours or more per week	59	61	60	63	65
Less than 35 hours per week	58	57	62	64	64
Looking for work	43	48	52	47	55
Not in labor force	45	44	47	43	52

^a Estimates are based on children who have not yet entered kindergarten.

^b Center-based programs include day care centers, Head Start programs, preschools, prekindergartens, and other early childhood programs.

^c Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

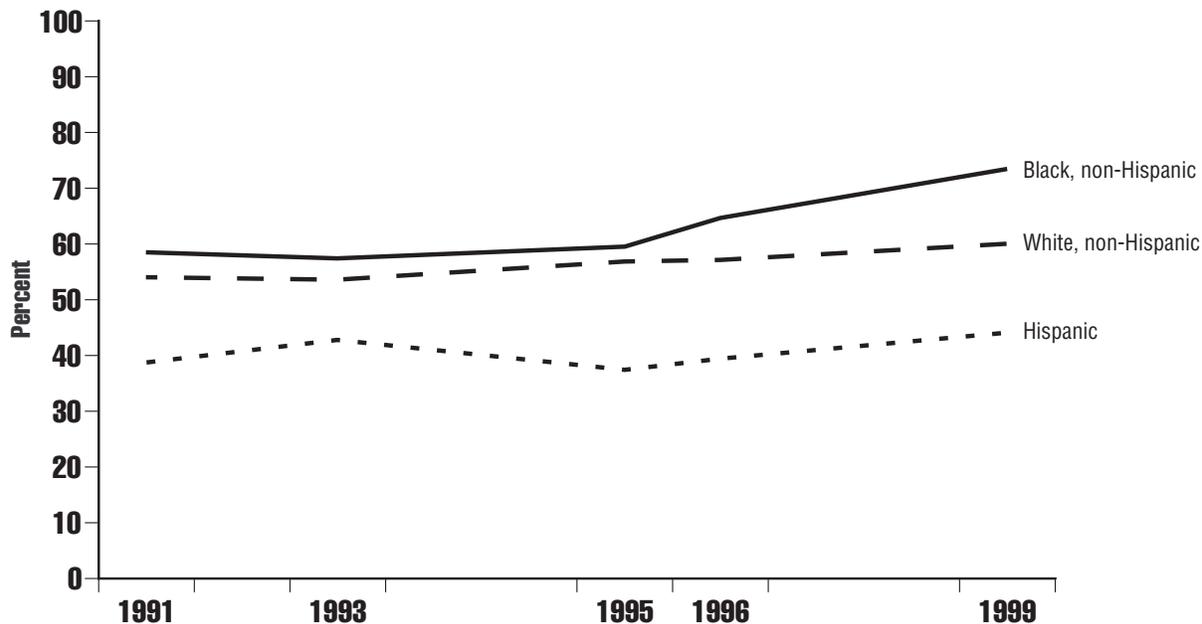
^d Poverty estimates for 1991 and 1993 are not comparable to later years because respondents were not asked exact household income.

^e Children without mothers in the home are not included in estimates dealing with mother's education or mother's employment status.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Survey. As published in *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2001*. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, (Table ED2).

Figure EA 1.1.B

Percentage of 3- to 5-year-olds^a in the United States enrolled in center-based programs,^b by race and Hispanic origin:^c
Selected years, 1991-1999



^a Estimates are based on children who have not yet entered kindergarten.

^b Center-based programs include day care centers, Head Start programs, preschools, nursery schools, prekindergartens, and other early childhood programs.

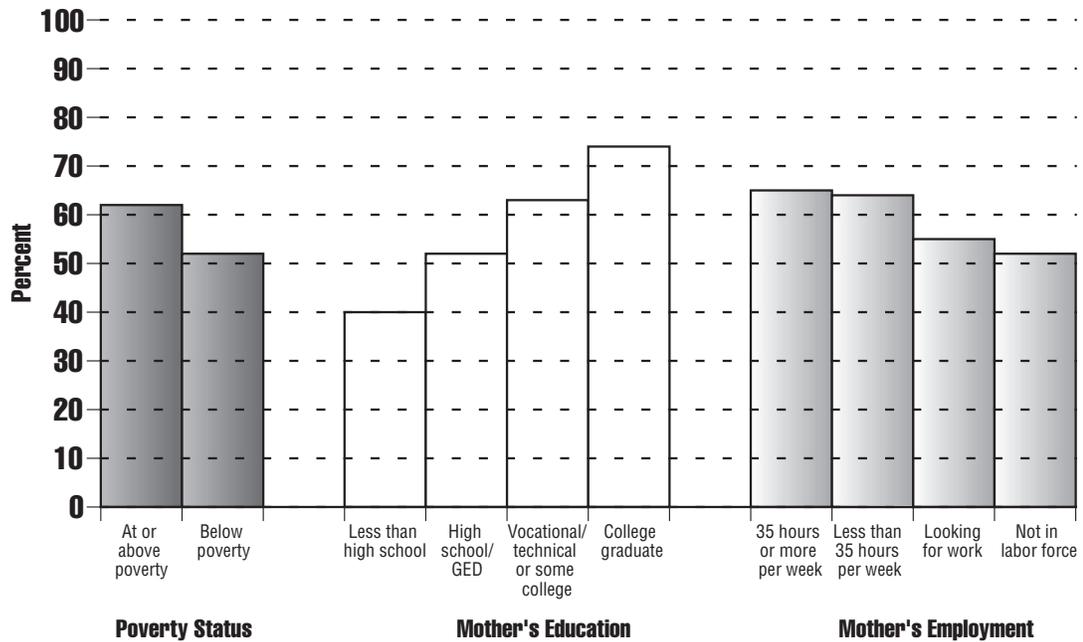
^c Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Survey. As published in *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2001*. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, (Table ED2).

Enrollment/Attendance

Figure EA 1.1.C

Percentage of 3- to 5-year-olds^a in the United States enrolled in center-based programs,^b by poverty status, mother's education,^c and mother's employment status:^c 1999



^a Estimates are based on children who have not yet entered kindergarten.

^b Center-based programs include day care centers, Head Start programs, preschools, nursery schools, prekindergartens, and other early childhood programs.

^c Children without mothers in the home are not included in estimates dealing with mother's education or mother's employment status.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey. As published in *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2001*. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC, U.S. Government Printing Office, (Table ED2).

EDUCATION AND ACHIEVEMENT

EA 1.2 Grade Retention: 2nd Graders Retained in Kindergarten/1st Grade

Children's early primary school experiences are associated with their adjustment to school and their later school success. Grade retention (repeating a grade) at an early age may indicate that a child has started school without adequate preparation and may continue to experience school problems in subsequent years. It may also measure the degree to which schools are able to respond to children from a variety of backgrounds.³

Table EA 1.2 presents data on the percentage of 2nd grade students who were retained in kindergarten and/or 1st grade as reported by their parents.

Differences by Gender. A higher percentage of boys repeat kindergarten and/or 1st grade in 1991 and 1999 compared to girls (see Table EA 1.2). For example, in 1999, 10 percent of boys were retained, compared with 6 percent of girls.

Differences by Poverty Status. Grade repetition differs by family poverty status and maternal education levels. In 1999, 16 percent of 2nd graders in poor families had repeated a grade, in comparison with 5 percent of 2nd graders living in nonpoor families (see Table EA 1.2). Grade repetition varies by maternal education, with the highest percentage of grade repetition in 1999 among children whose mothers did not complete high school (16 percent) and the lowest reported percentage among children whose mothers had graduated college or attended some college or a vocational/technical school (6 percent) (see Table EA 1.2).

³ Alexander, K.L., Entwisle, D.R., and Dauber, S.L. 1994. *On the Success of Failure: A Reassessment of the Effects of Retention in the Primary Grades*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Table EA 1.2

Percentage of 2nd graders in the United States who were retained in kindergarten and/or 1st grade, by child and family characteristics: Selected years, 1991-1999

	1991	1993	1995	1996	1999
Total	11	8	8	7	8
Gender					
Male	13	10	11	8	10
Female	9	—	5	—	6
Race and Hispanic origin^a					
White, non-Hispanic	9	7	7	6	8
Black, non-Hispanic	15	—	—	—	8
Hispanic	18	—	—	—	8
Poverty status^b					
At or above poverty	9	8	7	5	5
Below poverty	18	—	10	—	16
Family structure^c					
Two parents	10	7	8	5	7
One or no parent	14	11	9	—	10
Mother's education^d					
Less than high school	21	—	—	—	16
High school/GED	12	9	9	—	8
Vocational/technical or some college	9	—	7	—	6
College graduate	—	—	—	—	6
Mother's employment status^d					
35 hours or more per week	12	8	9	—	8
Less than 35 hours per week	8	—	—	—	8
Not in labor force	11	—	8	—	7

— = sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.

^a Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

^b The poverty threshold for 1995 and 1996 data was calculated using the total number of household members and estimates of household income to the nearest \$1,000 either alone or in combination with *exact* income information. The 1995 and 1996 poverty calculations differ from calculations in other years (1991 and 1993), which were based on total number of household members and estimates of household income (in increments of \$5,000 or \$1,000) only. Calculations for all years do not account for the number of children in the household.

^c Parents include any combination of a biological, adoptive, step-, and foster mothers and/or fathers. No parents in the household indicates that the child is living with nonparent guardians (e.g., grandparents).

^d Children without mothers in the home are not included in estimates dealing with mother's education or mother's employment status. A mother is defined as a biological mother, adoptive mother, stepmother, foster mother, or female guardian (e.g., grandmother) who resides in the home with the child.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1996, and 1999 National Household Education Surveys. Tabulations of data performed by U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (unpublished).

EA 1.3 School Absenteeism

An important aspect of students' access to education is the amount of time actually spent in the classroom. When students are absent from school, they forgo opportunities to learn. As a result, nonattendance is considered detrimental to students' achievement, promotion, graduation, and employment potential.

Differences by Grade. The percentage of 8th-grade students who were absent from school 3 or more days in the preceding month has remained relatively constant between 21 and 23 percent from 1990 to 1998 (see Table EA 1.3). During the same time period, a slightly larger percentage of 12th-grade students were absent from school for that length of time, with percentages ranging between 26 and 31 percent.

Differences by Race and Hispanic Origin.⁴ Among 8th graders in 1998, American Indian/Alaska Native and Hispanic students, at 34 percent and 25 percent respectively, were the most likely to have been absent 3 or more days in the preceding month. White, non-Hispanic and Asian students had the lowest absentee rates at 21 and 17 percent, respectively, followed by Black, non-Hispanic students at 23 percent. The patterns are similar for 12th-grade students, though the differences range from lows of 26 to 28 percent for White, non-Hispanic, Asian, and Black, non-Hispanic students, to a high of 41 percent for American Indian/Alaska Native Students.

Differences by Parents' Education Level.⁵ Absences from school were highest for students whose better-educated parent had less than a high school education (see Figure EA 1.3). In 1998, for example, 33 percent of 8th graders whose better-educated parent lacked a high school diploma were absent from school 3 or more days in the preceding month, compared with 17 percent of their peers who had at least one parent with a college degree. Similar differences were reported for 12th-grade students.

Differences by Type of School. Students who attended private or Catholic schools experienced fewer school absences than did students from public schools, across all grades and years (see Table EA 1.3).

⁴ Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

⁵ Parents' education level refers to the highest level of education completed by either parent.

Table EA 1.3

Percentage of 8th- and 12th-grade students in the United States who were absent from school 3 or more days in the preceding month, by gender, race and Hispanic origin,^a parents' education level,^b and type of school: Selected years, 1990-1998

	8th Grade					12th Grade				
	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998
Total	23	22	22	23	21	31	26	28	26	26
Gender										
Male	21	21	22	22	21	29	24	27	25	26
Female	24	24	22	23	22	32	27	28	28	28
Race and Hispanic origin^a										
White, non-Hispanic	22	21	20	21	21	31	24	26	26	26
Black, non-Hispanic	23	22	27	25	23	30	29	32	28	28
Hispanic	26	31	28	29	25	34	32	32	29	32
Asian/Pacific Islander	9	12	21	18	17	32	19	28	26	26
American Indian/ Alaska Native	37	38	39	29	34	—	—	53	30	41
Parents' education level^b										
Less than high school	38	31	33	32	33	41	30	36	35	32
Graduated high school	27	23	26	26	25	34	28	30	30	30
Some education after high school	22	21	22	23	23	31	26	27	30	27
Graduated college	15	19	18	18	17	27	23	25	21	24
Type of school										
Public	23	23	23	23	22	31	27	28	28	28
Nonpublic	13	14	15	16	15	24	17	21	18	19

— = sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.

^a Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

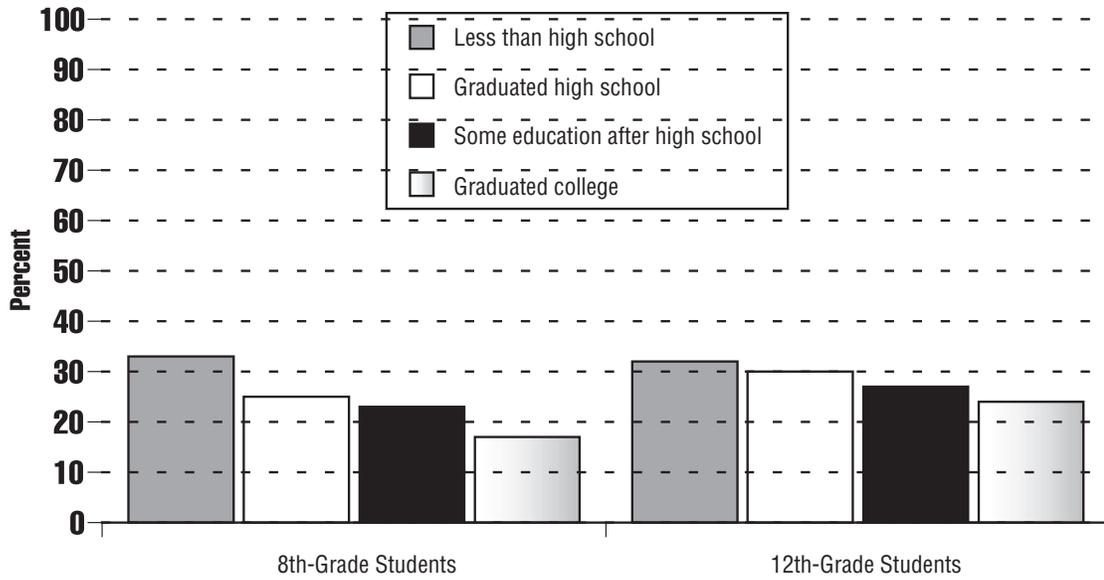
Note: The sample for this table is based on the 1990, 1992, 1996, and 1998 National Mathematics Assessments and the 1994 National Reading Assessment.

Sources: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1990, 1992, 1994, and 1996 *Data Almanacs*. National Reading Assessment data (1994) are from unpublished data almanacs.

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Figure EA 1.3

Percentage of 8th- and 12th-grade students in the United States who were absent from school 3 or more days in the preceding month, by parents' education level:^a 1998



^a Parents' education level refers to the highest level of education completed by either parent.

Sources: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1990, 1992, 1994, and 1996 *Data Almanacs*. (Question #15, S004001). National Reading Assessment data (1994) are from unpublished data almanacs.

EDUCATION AND ACHIEVEMENT

EA 1.4 High School Dropouts

Because high school completion has become a requirement for accessing additional education, training, or the labor force, the economic consequences of leaving high school without a diploma are severe. On average, dropouts are more likely to be unemployed than *high school graduates* and to earn less money when they eventually secure work⁶. High school dropouts are also more likely to receive public assistance than high school graduates who do not go on to college⁷. This increased reliance on public assistance is likely due, at least in part, to the fact that young women who drop out of school are more likely to have children at younger ages and more likely to be single parents than high school graduates⁸. Lastly, dropouts make up a disproportionate percentage of the nation's prison and death row inmates⁹.

There are several ways to calculate *dropout rates*. The one used here is the *event dropout rate*, which is the proportion of students who were enrolled in one year who were then not enrolled in the following year and did not earn a high school credential in the intervening year. According to this measure, five percent of all young people 15-24 years old who were enrolled in school dropped out of grades 10-12 in 1999 (see Table EA 1.4).

Differences by Gender. The dropout rates for male and female students did not differ significantly in 1999.¹⁰ Approximately 5 percent of both males and females had dropped out of high school in 1999.

Differences by Family Income.¹¹ *Family income* serves as a good indicator for other social and economic factors that are likely to be related to a young person's decision to stay in school. Since the mid 1970s there has been an overall downward trend in the dropout rates for young adults living in families at all *income* levels. Most of the declines in dropout rates for all income groups occurred in the 1970s and 80s. In the early 1990s, event dropout rates for all income groups have stabilized (see Table EA 1.4 and Figure EA 1.4B).

Differences by Race and Hispanic origin. The 1999 data on event dropouts by race and ethnicity confirm some earlier findings about the strong association between race/ethnicity and the likelihood of dropping out of school.¹² For example, the High School and Beyond Study shows that Hispanics and Blacks are at greater risk of dropping out than Whites.¹³ In 1999, 8 percent of Hispanic and 7 percent of Black, non-Hispanic students dropped out of school compared to 4 percent of White, non-Hispanic students.

⁶ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1999. *The Condition of Education 1999*, NCES 99-022 Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. (Indicators 11 and 12).

⁷ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1998. *The Condition of Education 1998*, NCES 98-013 Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. (Indicator 34).

⁸ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1996. *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1996*, NCES 96-863, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

⁹ U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1991. *Comparing Federal and State Prison Inmates*, NCJ-145864, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

¹⁰ Significance test conducted by NCES and reported in *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1999*. U.S. Department of Education, NCES 2001-022. Washington, DC.

¹¹ The variable used to assess family income is derived from a single question asked of the household respondent in the October CPS.

¹² U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2000. *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1999*. NCES 2001-022. Washington, DC.

¹³ Ekstron, Goertz, Pollack and Rock 1987, Who Drops out of High School and Why? Findings from a National Study, in *School Dropouts: Patterns and Policies* (G. Natriello, ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

EDUCATION AND ACHIEVEMENT

Table EA 1-4

Event dropout rate (percentage) for youth in the United States in grades 10 through 12 by gender, family income, and race and Hispanic origin:^a Selected years, 1975-1999

	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995 ^c	1996	1997	1998	1999
Total	6	6	5	4	6	5	5	5	5
Gender									
Male	5	7	5	4	6	5	5	5	5
Female	6	6	5	4	5	5	4	5	5
Family income^b									
Low income	16	16	14	10	13	11	12	13	11
Middle income	6	6	5	4	6	5	4	4	5
High income	3	3	2	1	2	2	2	3	2
Race and Hispanic origin									
White, non-Hispanic	5	5	4	3	5	4	4	4	4
Male	5	6	5	4	5	4	—	—	—
Female	5	5	4	3	4	4	—	—	—
Black, non-Hispanic	9	8	8	5	6	7	5	5	7
Male	8	8	8	4	8	5	—	—	—
Female	9	9	7	6	5	9	—	—	—
Hispanic ^a	11	12	10	8	12	9	10	9	8
Male	10	18	9	9	12	10	—	—	—
Female	12	7	10	7	13	8	—	—	—

^a Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

^b Low income is defined as the bottom 20 percent of all family incomes for the year; middle income is between 20 and 80 percent of all family incomes; and high income is the top 20 percent of all family incomes. See the glossary for a full definition of family incomes.

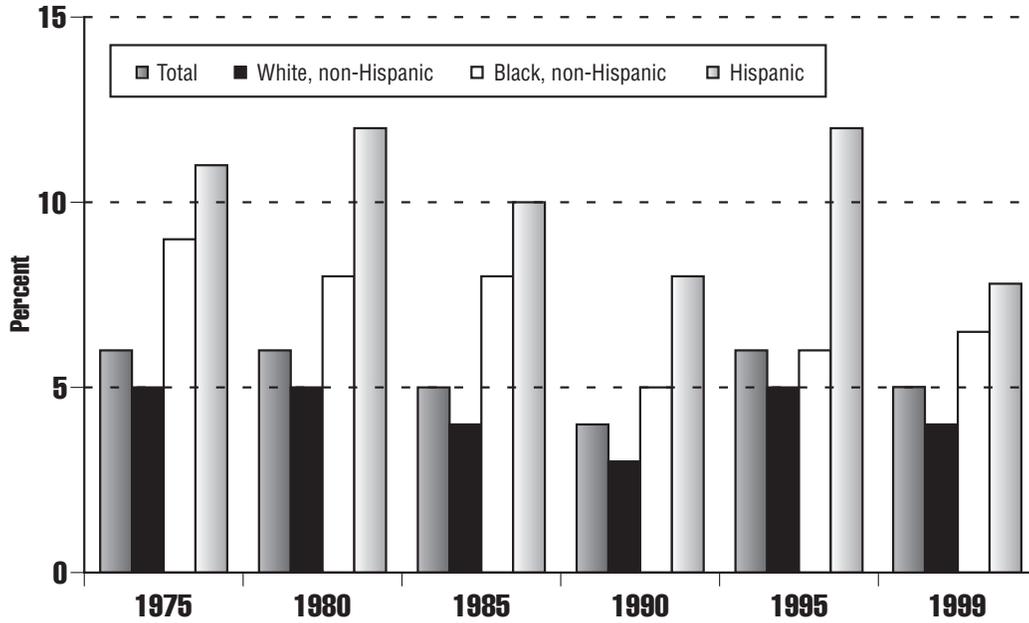
^c Numbers after 1990 reflect new editing procedures instituted by the Census Bureau for cases with missing data on school enrollment items. Numbers after 1992 reflect new wording of the educational attainment item in the Current Population Survey. Numbers after 1994 may reflect changes in the Current Population Survey due to newly instituted computer-assisted interviewing and/or due to the change in the population controls to the 1990 Census-based estimates, with adjustments for undercount.

Sources: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2000. *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1999*, (Tables A9 and B3), *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1998*, (Table 1).

Enrollment/Attendance

Figure EA 1.4.A

Event dropout rate for youth in the United States in grades 10 through 12, by race and Hispanic origin:^a Selected years, 1975-1999

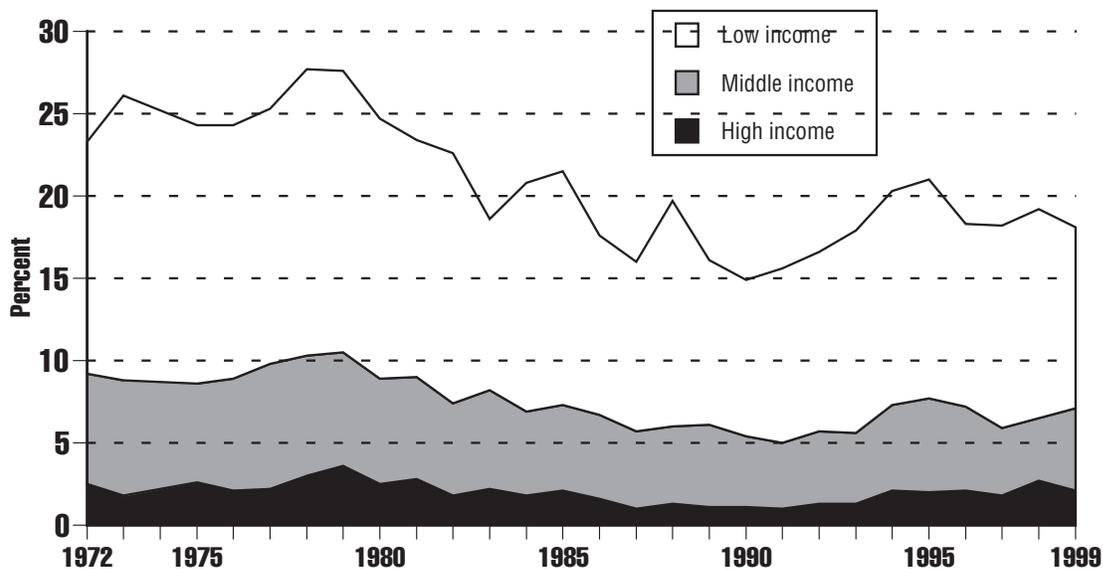


^a Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Sources: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2000. *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1999*, (Table B3).

Figure EA 1.4.B

Event dropout rate for youth in the United States in grades 10 through 12, by family income:^a 1972-1999



^a Low income is defined as the bottom 20 percent of all family incomes for the year; middle income is between 20 and 80 percent of all family incomes; and high income is the top 20 percent of all family incomes. See the glossary for a full definition of family income. Data on family income are missing for 1974. Numbers for years 1987 through 1999 reflect new editing procedures instituted by the U.S. Census Bureau for cases with missing data on school enrollment items. Numbers for years 1992 through 1999 reflect new wording of the educational attainment item in the CPS beginning in 1992. Numbers for years 1994 through 1999 reflect changes in the CPS due to newly instituted computer-assisted interviewing and the change in population controls used in the 1990 Census-based estimates, with adjustment for undercounting in the 1990 Census.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2000. *Dropout, 1999*.

EA 1.5 High School Completion

The differences in employment rates and earnings between youth who have completed high school and those who have not have been growing over the last two decades. In 1998, young males and females ages 25-34 who dropped out of high school scored 30 and 31 percent less than their peers who received a high school diploma.¹⁴

The high school completion rate represents the proportion of 18- to 24-year-olds who have earned a high school diploma or alternative credential, such as the General Education Development (GED) credential. In 1999, the high school completion rate for the country was 86 percent; a slight increase since 1972 (see Table EA 1.5). Between 1972 and 1985, the high school completion rate climbed 2 percentage points from 83 to 85 percent. Since 1985 the completion rate has remained steady at around 86 percent.

Although the overall completion rate has remained steady in recent years, the number of students earning a traditional high school diploma has been decreasing. In 1990, 81 percent of high school completers earned a diploma, compared with 77 percent in 1999. However, the alternative credential has become more common in recent years—between 1990 and 1999 the number of youth earning an equivalent credential almost doubled, rising from 5 to 9 percent.

Differences by Race and Hispanic Origin.¹⁵ The high school completion trend data for different racial/ethnic groups are similar to the national trend data, with positive increases in completion early in the last quarter century, and rates stabilizing in the last decade. Specifically, high school completion rates for White, non-Hispanic students climbed from 86 percent in 1972 to about 90 percent in the early 1990s (see Figure EA 1.5). Since that time, the completion rate has fluctuated around 90 percent. However, the 1999 completion rate of 91 percent for Whites was significantly higher than their completion rates in every year before 1990.¹⁶

The high school completion rate for Black, non-Hispanic youth has also increased significantly since 1972 but has stabilized in the 1990s. Furthermore, the gap between Black, non-Hispanic and White, non-Hispanic completion rates has narrowed during that timeframe. In 1972 the completion gap was 14 percent, while in 1999 the gap had closed to 7 percent.

In contrast to the closing of the Black–White gap in high school completion rates, the Hispanic–White completion gap was about the same in 1999 as it was in 1972 (30 and 28 point differences, respectively). Although the Hispanic high school completion rate increased during this period, it did so at a rate that was no faster than that for Whites, non-Hispanic.

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2001. *Condition of Education: 2000*, (Indicator 23).

¹⁵ Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

¹⁶ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2000. *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1999*.

Table EA 1.5

High school completion rates (percentage) and method of completion for 18- through 24-year-olds^a in the United States, by race and Hispanic origin:^b Selected years, 1972-1999

	1972	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995 ^c	1996	1997	1998	1999
Total										
Completed	83	84	84	85	86	85	86	86	85	86
Diploma	—	—	—	—	81	78	76	77	75	77
Equivalent ^d	—	—	—	—	5	8	10	9	10	9
White, non-Hispanic										
Completed	86	87	88	88	90	90	92	91	90	91
Diploma	—	—	—	—	85	83	81	81	80	82
Equivalent ^d	—	—	—	—	5	7	11	9	10	9
Black, non-Hispanic										
Completed	72	70	75	81	83	85	83	82	81	84
Diploma	—	—	—	—	78	75	73	72	72	73
Equivalent ^d	—	—	—	—	5	9	10	10	10	11
Hispanic^b										
Completed	56	62	57	67	59	63	62	67	63	63
Diploma	—	—	—	—	55	54	55	59	52	55
Equivalent ^d	—	—	—	—	4	9	7	8	11	9

^a Refers to persons not currently enrolled in high school or below.

^b Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

^c Numbers from 1992 on reflect new wording of the educational attainment item in the Current Population Survey.

Numbers from 1994 on may reflect changes in the Current Population Survey due to newly instituted computer-assisted interviewing and/or due to the change in the population controls used this year to the 1990 Census-based estimates, with adjustments for undercount.

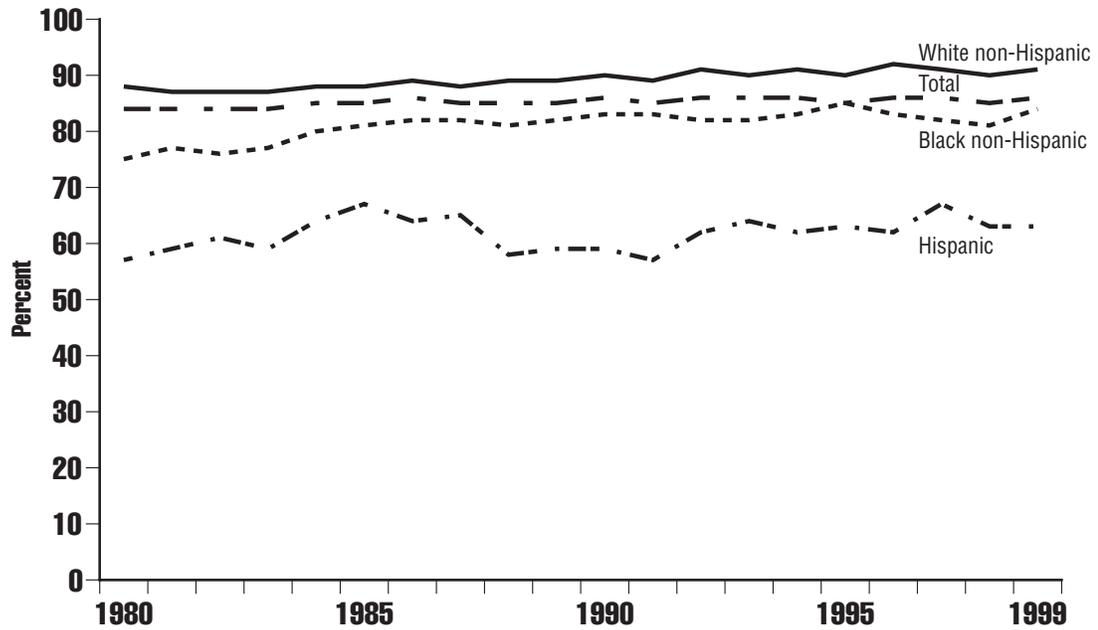
^d Equivalents include passing the General Educational Development (GED) exam.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999*, (Table 4).

Enrollment/Attendance

Figure EA 1.5

High school completion rates for 18- through 24-year-olds^a in the United States, by race and Hispanic origin:^b Selected years, 1980-1999



^a Refers to persons not currently enrolled in high school or below.

^b Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Sources: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999*, (Table 4).

EDUCATION AND ACHIEVEMENT

EA 1.6 College Attendance and Completion

College attendance and receipt of a bachelor's degree increase employment opportunities and income potential. Adults with higher levels of education are more likely to participate in the labor force. For example in 1999, 80 percent of adults over age 25 who had completed college participated in the labor force compared to 65 percent of high school graduates and 43 percent of high school dropouts.¹⁷ Furthermore, between 1979 and 1999 median real weekly wages increased by almost 15 percent for males age 25 and over who had completed college, while falling by 12 percent for men with only a high school diploma. Thus, college graduates earned 68 percent more than high school graduates in 1999, up from 29 percent in 1979.¹⁸

The last three decades have witnessed a growth in the number of young adults completing college level work. The percentage of 25- through 29-year-old high school graduates who had completed at least some college and the percentage who received a bachelor's degree or higher have both increased by 50 percent between 1971 and 2000 (see Table EA 1.6).

Differences by Race and Hispanic origin.¹⁹ In 2000, White, non-Hispanic high school graduates were far more likely (36 percent) to complete college than either their Black, non-Hispanic (21 percent) or their Hispanic (15 percent) peers. Furthermore, White, non-Hispanic youth were more likely to have attended college than Black, non-Hispanic and Hispanic youth (68 versus 61 and 52 percent respectively). The gap between White, non-Hispanic and minorities in college attendance and completion has not decreased over time.

Differences by Gender. In 1971, the percentage of young men completing college was 8 percentage points higher than the percentage of women. Over the last three decades, however, this gap lessened gradually, and in 1991 more women were completing college. By 2000, 5 percent more women than men completed college. A similar trend was observed for college attendance (See Table EA 1.6).

¹⁷ U.S. Department of Education. 2001. *Digest of Education Statistics: 2000*. National Center for Education Statistics. NCES 2001-034 p427. Washington DC.

¹⁸ White House Council of Economic Advisors, 2000. *Teens and their Parents in the 21st Century*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

¹⁹ Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Table EA 1.6

Percentage of 25- through 29-year-old high school graduates^a in the United States who have attended some college or have received a bachelor's degree or higher, by race and Hispanic origin^b and gender: Selected years, 1971-2000

	1971	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Some college or more^c	44	50	52	51	52	62	65	65	66	66	66
Race and Hispanic origin ^b											
White, non-Hispanic	45	51	54	52	54	65	67	68	69	69	68
Black, non-Hispanic	31	39	42	43	44	52	56	54	57	58	61
Hispanic	31	41	40	44	40	50	51	54	52	51	52
Gender											
Male	49	56	56	52	52	61	63	64	63	64	64
Female	38	44	49	50	52	64	66	67	68	69	69
Bachelor's degree or higher^d	22	26	26	26	27	28	31	32	31	32	33
Race and Hispanic origin ^b											
White, non-Hispanic	23	28	28	27	29	31	34	35	35	36	36
Black, non-Hispanic	12	15	15	14	16	18	17	16	18	17	21
Hispanic	11	17	13	18	14	16	16	18	17	14	15
Gender											
Male	26	30	28	27	28	27	30	31	30	31	32
Female	18	23	25	25	26	27	32	33	32	33	34
Associate's degree	—	—	—	—	—	10	10	9	10	10	10
Race and Hispanic origin ^b											
White, non-Hispanic	—	—	—	—	—	10	10	9	10	10	10
Black, non-Hispanic	—	—	—	—	—	8	8	7	8	10	9
Hispanic	—	—	—	—	—	7	8	9	9	9	9

^a High school completion or high school graduate is defined as 12 years of school completed for 1971-1991 and high school diploma or equivalency certificate for 1992-1997. Beginning in 1992, the Current Population Survey changed the questions used to obtain educational attainment of respondents.

^b Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

^c This was measured as "one or more years of college" for 1971-1991 and as "some college or more" for 1992-1997.

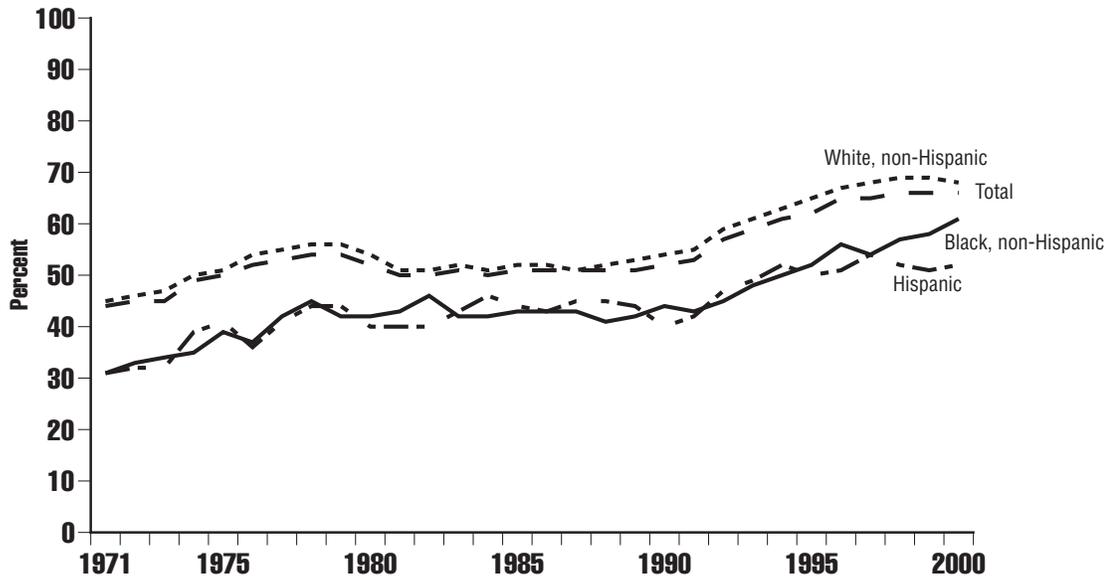
^d This was measured as "four or more years of college" for 1971-1991 and as "bachelor's degree or higher" for 1992-1997.

Sources: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. 2001. *The Condition of Education 2000*, (Tables 31-2 and 31-3); Associate degree data as published in *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2001*. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, (Table ED7).

Enrollment/Attendance

Figure EA 1.6.A

Percentage of 25- through 29-year-old high school graduates^a in the United States who have attended some college, by race and Hispanic origin:^b Selected years, 1971-2000



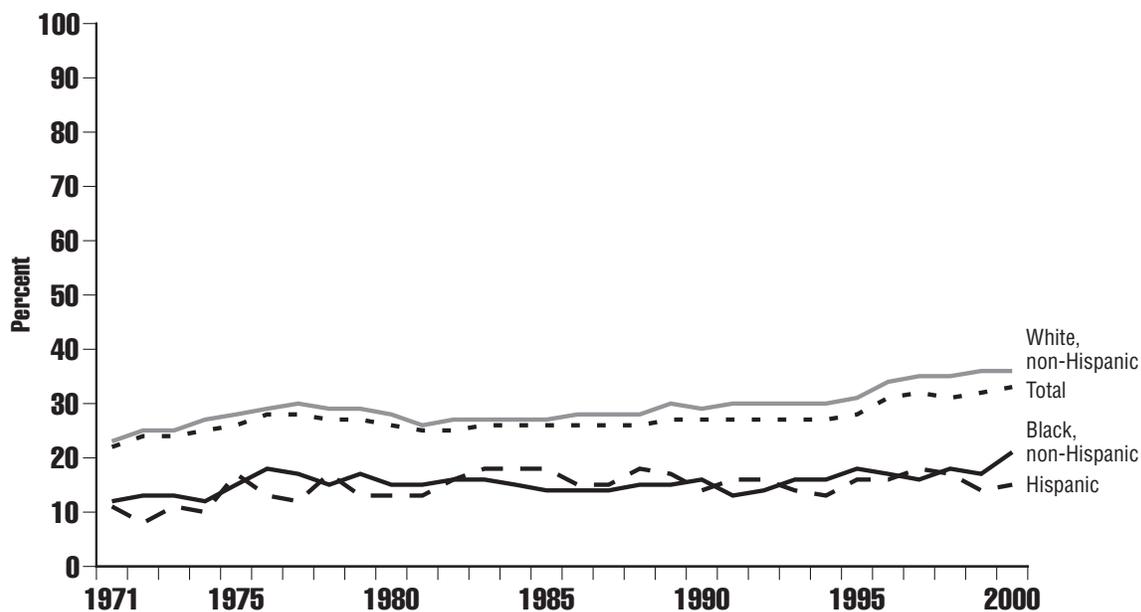
^a High school completion or high school graduate is defined as 12 years of school completed for 1971-1991 and high school diploma or equivalency certificate for 1992-1997. Beginning in 1992, the Current Population Survey changed the questions used to obtain the educational attainment of respondents.

^b Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2000.

Figure EA 1.6.B

Percentage of 25- through 29-year-old high school graduates^a in the United States who have received a bachelor's degree,^b by race and Hispanic origin:^c Selected years, 1971-2000



^a High school completion or high school graduate is defined as 12 years of school completed for 1971-1991 and high school diploma or equivalency certificate for 1992-1997. Beginning in 1992, the Current Population Survey changed the questions used to obtain the educational attainment of respondents.

^b This was measured as “four or more years of college” for 1971-1991 and as “bachelor’s degree or higher” for 1992-1997.

^c Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2000.